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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MOSCOW 002483

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PMAR](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [ECON](#) [EFIN](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR BEFORE FED COUNCIL: "RESET" WITH
RUSSIAN PARLIAMENTARIANS

Classified By: CDA Eric Rubin; reasons 1.4(b/d).

11. (C) Summary: On September 21, Ambassador Beyrle addressed the Federation Council's International Relations Committee, highlighting President Obama's visit to Moscow and the importance of developing closer relations between the U.S. and Russia. Questions from committee members focused on how to get beyond Jackson-Vanik, anti-Russian (and anti-American) attitudes, and how to bring our societies together through culture, educational and sports exchanges. Federation Council members participating in the 90-minute session expressed appreciation for the U.S. effort to build closer links with their chamber of the parliament. End Summary.

12. (SBU) At the invitation of Federation Council International Relations Committee Chairman Mikhail Margelov, the Ambassador on September 21 addressed both a session of the committee open to the press, and a closed session in which he and members had a productive exchange on bilateral relations. The remarks in the presence of media received considerable coverage in the Russian press and can be read on the Embassy website. Margelov set the context for the discussion by noting the importance of good will in the development of relations between two countries as the pretext for practical cooperation. Margelov and the Ambassador spoke to Russian and foreign media after the session, stressing the frank open dialogue they had had, noting that in spite of differences on some matters, they agreed that there is more that unites Russia and the U.S. than divides the two countries.

Top Issues in Private

13. (C) After press were ushered from the room, Margelov continued the session, opening the floor to questions from Federation Council members (from the International Relations Committee and others, including Defense) and invited outside experts, including USA and Canada Institute Director Sergey Rogov. Discussion addressed:

-- Jackson-Vanik: Federation Council member Toshkin asked how it was possible that Jackson-Vanik remains in force when more than ten percent of Israeli Knesset members are Russian emigres. He followed up by inquiring whether Russia could enter the WTO with Jackson-Vanik still in force. Ambassador reminded members that President Obama had referred to J-V as an "anachronism" during his July visit to Moscow. He encouraged Federation Council members to continue to raise the matter with Members of Congress, but at the same time to ensure that protectionist steps taken in Russia, such as the instituting of barriers to the importation of U.S. meat and other products were not allowed to take root and thereby complicate the situation.

-- Anti-Russian sentiment in the U.S.: Responding to a question from Aleksandr Dzasokhov, Chairman of the Federation Council Committee on Culture about how to address anti-Russian sentiments in the U.S., the Ambassador observed that anti-Russian views in the U.S. - and anti-American views in Russia - are the result of 50 years of Cold War confrontation, and that the positive benefits of good bilateral relations will take time to alter public attitudes.

He observed that good will for the development of closer ties exists at the top levels of both governments, and that as relations produce concrete results, public sentiment will change in both countries. Ambassador reinforced the importance of cultural exchanges between both countries, and in particular educational exchanges for young students. He reminded members that the chairmen of the Civil Society Working Group under the Bilateral Presidential Commission (BPC), Mike McFaul and Vladislav Surkov, would tackle these issues, among others, in the coming months.

-- Inter-parliamentary exchanges: Nikolay Tulayev, chair of the parliamentary activities committee, argued that the promise of inter-parliamentary exchanges, especially through the OSCE, as a means of improving relations among countries had faded.

-- Arms Control: Tulayev lamented the loss of connections between elected officials of different countries, since those ties contributed to cooperation on arms control and other areas throughout the 1990's. Ambassador agreed that these contacts had been useful, but noted that the U.S. did not see the need to create a new organization to promote such

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interaction. Rather, we were counseling that countries should make use of existing organizational structures.

-- Sports and Culture: Chair of the Federation Council Committee on Sports, Hockey Hall of Famer Vyacheslav Fetisov, put in a plug for including sports exchange in the work of the BPC.

-- Promoting Greater U.S. Trade with and Investment in Russia: Ambassador reported that senior executives from major American companies, including Microsoft, Walmart and Pepsico had all participated in the recent Sochi Economic Forum, interested in investment and bolstering trade.

14. (C) Sergey Rogov, Director of the USA-Canada Institute prefaced his questions with a detailed assessment of U.S.-Russian relations over the past year, covering the difficulties encountered in trying to deal with fallout from the Georgia war, missile defense and concerns over possible NATO membership for Ukraine and/or Georgia. But, with the decision to reconfigure how the U.S. (and Allies) address Iranian missile threats, including canceling the construction of missile defense facilities in Poland and the Czech Republic, the U.S. was actually taking into account Russian concerns. In spite of progress on other issues, including cooperation on Afghanistan, as well as the good personal relationship between Presidents Obama and Medvedev, Rogov nonetheless worried that the START follow-on agreement might get hung up in the U.S. Senate. He asked what Russia should do to maintain the good will momentum. Ambassador argued that Russia, together with the other P-5, projecting a united front against Iranian threats and joining in tough, coordinated action that imposes costs (sanctions) on Tehran for flaunting the UNSC would also show Russia's willingness to confront Iran, and create an atmosphere more conducive to easy ratification of START.

Don't Leave Before Addressing Georgia and CFE

15. (C) Taking a few last questions at the end of over 90 minutes of presentation and discussion, Ambassador was asked about U.S. military support for Georgia. Ambassador noted

that we support Georgian sovereignty and the Georgian people in their ongoing efforts to build a prosperous, democratic future for their country. Georgia is contributing forces to the military campaign in Afghanistan, and has requested and received assistance from the U.S. to prepare those forces for that assignment. The Ambassador urged that Federation Council members consider the full context of the Afghanistan-specific assistance for Georgia. And finally, on CFE, the Ambassador said he regretted Russia's decision not to live up to its obligations under the CFE Treaty. CFE remains a cornerstone of European security, requiring Russia and other parties to the treaty to consider ways to revive and strengthen it.

Comment

16. (C) The session was remarkably friendly and has already opened doors. Federation Council Chairman Mironov, who has refused to meet us for over a year, phoned the Embassy the day after the International Relations Committee session (and after extensive media coverage) to propose a date for a meeting with the Ambassador. Given access restrictions to Duma officials, not to mention the Duma building itself, this outreach opportunity will hopefully open more doors for us.
Rubin